

JAGUAR YOKOTA! beats the living hell out LIONESS ASUKA! RECKLESS YOUTH! and BILLY KIDMAN! don't have one for the ages. MITSUHARA MISAWA! beats the living crud out of JUN AKIYAMA! YUMI FUKAWA! and CANDY OKUTSU! go at it shootstyle and other stuff!

ALOHA~!

WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #76!

Without Further Adeui (or something), congrats to OMEGA grappler Will-O-the-Wisp for getting the UWA Middleweight Title from Ikuto Hidaka in a match for the title in the beloved BATTLARTS! WOO-HOO! Wotta a way to make a splash in your first Japan tour! WOO-HOO! ME WANT TAPE! The fact that I can't picture or understand it doesn't lessen the total AWESOMENESS of it by one iota. Anyhoos, this weeks batch of stuff is through the kind and loving efforts of Phil, Phil, and that mega-studbolt REV RAY! QUEBRADABOY Lorifice supplied the Arson (READ QUEBRADA! IT RULES!), Glenn! Master Of Super-Deliciousness, supplied the NJ, AJ and the WILDLY RESURGENT J'd. and Fellow MegaROADTRIPPER Hangman Tim supplied the AWC. Hey! Let's have a word with the Ripper...

AWC CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT COMMERCIAL TAPE (12/13/97)
(byPHIL THE RIPPER)

Well this little baby is to determine the Champ of the AWC. There is no specific weight division so that explains the inclusion of the rather portly "Dirty" Don Montoya. On the other hand, Reckless Youth, Billy Kidman and Ace Darling are all in this little shindig.

SuperNova vs. Devon Storm:

Reasons to hate SuperNova:

- 1.) He comes out to music by Pat Benatar.
- 2.)He has your run-of-the-mill cruiserweight moves but he doesn't execute them that crisply.
- 3.) His little blue and white outfit reveals that he has some bizarre paranormal connection to the Sandman.

Reasons to hate Devon Storm:

- 1.) He still hasn't figured out how to sell anything properly.
 - 2.)He always leaves you with the feeling that more could have been done.
- Yet, despite all odds, these two put on a decent little match. Nova advances with a top-rope Scorpion Death Drop. Hey, look at that. Two tournaments in the span of about 4 months and Storm jobs out in the First Round of both. Take that as a hint.

Billy Kidman vs. Ace Darling:

Now THIS is more like it. The Best American LightHeavyweight (Kidman) vs. The Best Wrestling You Never Heard off (Darling). This was great. It starts out fast and stays that way. Darling adapts well to anything that is thrown at him so when Kidman decides to get as aerial as a room with a 6-foot ceiling will allow him, Darling is up for the challenge. They even use the low ceiling

in a nice little spot as Darling throws Kidman straight up into the ceiling. Kidman also takes a pretty nasty powerbomb; landing squarely on his shoulder. Kidman sold everything a whole bunch. Darling sold a whole bunch. All in front of 17 people. KICK ASS! Kidman wins by blocking a roll-up.

Steve Corino vs. Adam Flash:

Flash hits the ring, pulls on the second rope and breaks it. I already want him to take his Marilyn Manson shirt back to Baltimore. They run this match anyway as they try to fix the ring. The wrestlers get around it by spending half the match outside the ring doing some really weak brawling. Flash tries to make up for his incompetence hitting an above average tope and a neato Michinoku Driver. Corino gets his chance as he reverses a Flash somersault into a Liger Bomb. Corino then advances with a Tornado DDT.

Reckless Youth vs. "Dirty" Don Montoya:

Well Reckless Youth rules all the inner Planets and their moons while Montoya has smaller people orbiting him. Still respect must be paid to Montoya. He is 300 pounds but he is probably better than any fat guy wandering around in either of the Big Two right now. He knows he is going to get one of his many asses handed to him by Reckless, yet he works as hard as he can to keep up with the younger, quicker Lord and Savior. He takes a unassisted tope that lands him in the first row, he then waddles back in and sells a whole lot more. Montoya also does a pretty damn fine Fisherman Buster along with a Liger Bomb. And the most impressive thing is that the match goes like 10 minutes and Montoya is not blown up. Reckless wins via submission and I am pleasantly surprised. BTW: they had a video package before this match of these two that was cool, including footage from Larry Sharpe's Monster Factory.

Super Nova vs. Steve Corino:

The King and Queen of Suck had a son. And this Prince of Suck begat a son who begat three sons, Suck, Suckier, Suckiest. Now while not much had been heard from Suck or Suckier, Suckiest began a pro wrestler. And said pro wrestler advanced to Finals thanks to a Dusty Finish.

Billy Kidman vs. Reckless Youth

I am pumped up for this. The Best American LightHeavyweight vs. The Ruler of the Inner Planets and Moons. This is gonna rule. 20+ plus minutes of non-stop action. No. Reckless wins in 5 minutes.

EEEXXXXXCCCCCUUUUUSSSSSSEEEEEEE ME!

REWIND!

I'm not kidding, 5 minutes. These guys stuffed in as much as they could but still... When did this become Nitro? Can this tournament get any shittier any quicker?

Reckless Youth vs. Super Nova:

Well, Super Nova was not afraid to get the Inferno Kid push in this tournament. Anyway, Nova slows this baby down a whole lot. Meanwhile, Reckless looks like he is about ready to beg, borrow or steal to get Nova to do something. So anyway, the story of this match is that Reckless

is working for two. Sometime during this match Nova does possibly the worst handspring elbow ever. I can just see it now, he's sitting at home looking through his wrestling tapes wondering which moves to take. "I want to do a handspring elbow. Let's see Muta, Shinsaki, ahh here we go Renegade." Anyway, all of the sudden Nova gets inspired. He hits a modified stun gun and then hits a nice looking reverse falcon arrow. I'm thinking, "wow! Reckless beat some sense into him." Nova climbs to the top rope and misses a headbutt. Not that Reckless rolled out of the way. Nova was supposed to hit but the moron come up two feet short. Oh well. Reckless hits a second rope frog splash and the match had a whole wad of psychology that I was digging but then the bottom fell out. Nova gets the victory as he comes out on top of a series of roll-ups. Pushed all the way to the title. Oh, I have seen better days.

NEW JAPAN AIR FORCE WARS J COMMERCIAL TAPE (10/97)
(byDEAN RASMUSSEN)

Shinjiro Otani/ Koji Kanemoto /Tatsuhito Takaiwa vs. Jushin Liger /El Samurai /Kendo Ka Shin (10/10/97):

OH YEAH! Kanemoto does this spinning roundhouse kick that CRUSHES Kendo Ka Shin like a BUG! Right in the face REALLY hard and Ka Shin takes it like a man. I had to love all of this match because it pretty much summed up what's great about the New Japan Juniors scene these days- stiffness, danger, total dick-like assholishness. Liger and El Samurai hate Kanemoto because he hangs out with young punks Ohtani and Takaiwa- but actually the story is that they want to trade young out-of-control prick Kendo Ka Shin for the old out-of-control prick Kanemoto but Koji ain't going for it so they settle for taking potshots at their annoying, insolent Junior Associate whenever possible- Liger just kicks Kendo while Kendo is against the ropes for no apparent reason at one point, in one of my favorite non-wrestling moments in this match- in between attempting to murderize Koji and the boys. KaShin and Kanemoto really put the heat in this feud and it inspires the other four in this match as Ohtani, Kanemoto and Takaiwa hit the AMAZINGLY SWANK Triple Dropkick Directly Into The Face Of Ka Shin As He's In The Tree Of Woe. Ohtani also hits a super high altitude dropkick right into the face earlier in the match on El Samurai and that should warrant a mention because it raised the bar a little in the brief history of this truly dickish spot. Kanemoto and KaShin beat the holy fudge out of each other and Kanemoto pummels the ref when he gets in the way. Kanemoto has spent his quota of dickishness and he tags in the smooth one of the three- Ohtani- and Shinjiro proceeds to suplex Ka Shin into oblivion. I love matches like these. WHOMP ASS.

Jushin THUNDER Liger v. Tatsuhito Takaiwa (10/13/97):

Jushin THUNDER Liger is the greatest Junior Heavyweight I can think of and- as a booker- he can be quite the kidder- I mean The J-Crown LAADDDIIIEESS, the Smokey Mountain brawl press conferences, getting Motegi into lots of tournaments, Honaga winning the Top of the Super J over Benoit, Eddy and Malenko, and now THIS! Takaiwa and Liger decide that it would be FUN to wrestle a New Japan HEAVYweight match and it's as goofy as you would expect. My favorite part is that four times in the match they challenge each other to run into them and try to knock the other over- just like Chono vs Sasaki did for an eternity in their match. Liger does

Chosu in and out of the ring- setting up his Shotay just like a RikiLariat. Takaiwa sets up his Death Valley Driver just like Kensuke Sasaki setting up his wife's Northern Lights Bomb. WAY in the middle of all NJ Junior matches. But pretty funny when you think about it. Liger is so godlike. In every way imaginable.

Koji Kanemoto vs. Kendo Ka Shin (10/16/97):

Koji Kanemoto does the now-prerequisite Drop Kick To The Face While You Gottem In The Tree Of Woe spot, but Koji does the really fun flailing tantrum kicks afterwards- which are great. For two guys with shoot gimmicks (well sorta), they did the whole pseudoshoot thing match all backwards. They start all over the mat and it was cool because Liger must have told them, "Koji. Ishi. I want you two to do armbars for the first eight minutes... but make them as dickish as humanly possible." THEN they start striking to set up the pro-style moves, skipping the usual striking to set up the mat work to set up the pro-style moves to counter the shoot holds OR the traditional (HAHAHA) beloved BattlARTS concept of psychology of Shootstyle Moves To Counter The Crushing Pro Style Moves. Psychology goes out the window between the striking section into pro-style section and the match drags as they fumble around setting up kicks and blowing a bunch of stuff. They finally quit trying to be fancy and just start kicking the dogpee out of each other and then Koji just starts REALLY beating the holy hell out of him and mauls up to the point of the final moonsault to finish off the poor sap. Koji SOMEHOW tops himself as being the biggest total dick in wrestling by having his hand raised while standing on Ka Shin's head. I REALLY thought I was going to weep. It was SO beautiful. The ending I mean. The match itself wasn't that great but the ending was quite the cake and body of the match. These guys hate each other a bunch and they hate each other so much they can't even see or wrestle straight. It comes across without dynamic "mic-work." Postmatch, Liger books it all Memphis with everybody in the pull apart beating the fuck out of each other- Takaiwa with flash paper, El Samurai running over Ohtani outside the studio, Naniwa winning the Unified Belt or something like that.

Shinjiro Ohtani v. El Samurai (10/16/97):

Kind of a throwaway match though each look really good in it. The highlight for me was the El Samurai variation of the Tree Of Woe Drop Kick Right In The Fukcin Face spot as El does the Lou Brock Stealing Second Slide right into the face of the young Shinjiro. One wonders if the Pete Rose facefirst slide can be far behind? I'd pay to see that. Ohtani suplexes like a mother and it's not impressively, spectacularly powerful like Benoit but it's more of a graceful, beautiful suplex like Manami Toyota hits when she's feeling it. Great arch, great speed. Great. Great. Great. Ohtani gets him with a missile leg lariat into a German Suplex. Liger dominates the world postmatch by not allowing Ohtani the luxury of trying to top Kanemoto in the most dickish way to get your hand raised as Liger kicks him in the face and drives him out of the ring. Liger is standing there as the picture fades out saying something to the effect of "C'mon pussy, you wanna piece a me?" Liger the Redneck Ass-Kicker RULES!

Kendo Ka Shin v. Shinjiro Ohtani (10/23/97):

HEY! These two have the best matches. The Ka Shin match was the best match of the Ohtani title run amd this five minute ditty was also real dang good. It starts off REAL All Japan-like.

Circa 1979. Ka Shin takes him to the floor and they brawl into the stands like Dory Funk and the Sheikh. Except there were little variations: 1979 All Japan- State-of-the-Art Bladejob. 1997 NJ Juniors- chairshots directly to the arm to set up the cross arm breaker. Ka Shin has a great mask and is quite a good wrestler. His reliance on wacky cross-armbreaker variations doesn't really bother me because in between CABs he is not afraid to dish out and take a truly Hotta-sized ass-kicking so he's WAY okay in my book. Ohtani is a good surly bastard when you get him out of the dome and he can be a dick like he wants to be. Ohtani suplexes and springboards the crap out of Kendo until Kendo finally gets to capitalize on the punishment he dished out to Shinjiro's arm early in the match and spins into a cross-armbreaker. Postmatch Kanemoto doesn't allow Ka Shin to try to beat the Total Dickweed Award that Koji acquired in his win over Ka Shin as Koji and Takaiwa start beating the hell out of anyone wearing a mask. Oh YEAH!

Jushin Liger vs. Koji Kanemoto (10/25/97):

This is the best match of the six main players in New Japan Juniors and this match is no let down. Liger has flawless Junior psychology and Kanemoto is the biggest, baddest opponent they could possibly muster for the Great One. Kanemoto can be as excessive and violent as he wants to be and Liger will always be able to take these components and make them make sense- a quality that isn't a strong point to some of Kanemoto's other matches at times. This starts on the mat with both working on the others formerly broken limb- Double Prick Action!- and goes into the air as Liger opts against his skull-crushing nouveau offense and goes back to his high-flying roots for a whole bunch of this. Kanemoto also remebers back when he was Tiger Mask 3 and does some flying. It settles down after the Lucha-tinged middle as it goes into the hard, stiff style we've all come to love and enjoy. Liger hits that fantabulous toprope SUPAFISHAMANBUSTA, Koji hits a super ugly rolling senton, and Koji goes into his "I would rather humilate you than pin you" routine which. of course, as always, costs him the match. Koji lands a moonsault right on Ligers knees and Liger Shotays the be-jeebers out of him and the best match on the tape comes to an end.

El Samurai v. Tatsuhiro Takaiwa (10/27/97):

This is a weird one to end the tape with. It's a basic Nitro match with each hitting some of their signature moves and a big rush to the finish. This wasn't great and was close to not being good, just because the length allowed gave it no time to tell anything. Baffling. But don't let it discourage you. You WANT ALL THIS.

!@!@!@!@!@!@! ALL JAPAN TV4/19/98 (taped 4/18 from Budokan)
(by REVEREND RAY)

There's a brief recap of Misawa beating the tar out of Akiyama before we go to...

Carney Finals :

Jun Akiyama v. Mitsuharu "Meltdown" Misawa:

Joined in progress, they play dueling elbows on one another until Misawa goes for a suplex on the apron and Akiyama blocks it and drop kicks him in the knee. Jun starts doing assorted nasty things to his knee out of the floor, tosses him in and continues to work over the leg, including putting Misawa into the scorpion death lock and a figure four. Jun went to go for a dragon screw off the top rope but Misawa elbows him out, top rope drop kicks him and then gives him his version of the stone cold chart bustin' wise crackin' Diamond Crusher and then put Akiyama in a couple of step over face locks. Akiyama gets tiger drivered for a 2, Misawa goes for the rolling elbow but Akiyama cuts him down with a drop kick to the knee, followed by a dragon screw. Akiyama hits a cool ass reverse calf branding (stand on the top rope, put your knee in the guy's face and drive it into the mat). Akiyama hits a bulldog. Apparently he knows of Baba's woody for big Texans and figures maybe he can trick him so he get a win. Akiyama hits an underhook piledriver. Akiyama goes move crazy: a guillotine powerbomb into a German into a drop kick to the knee into an exploder for 2. Akiyama gets a little too reckless and Misawa side steps a charge and gets in control with a release German, then hits a German and a tiger suplex for a two each. Akiyama reverses a suplex into a brainbuster for a two. Misawa fights out of an exploder with some elbows. Akiyama blocks a tiger driver, Misawa lets him go and hits a somersault leg drop kick, TD's him for two. Misawa hits the running elbow for the win. Misawa broke his hand in this match, unfortunately, I didn't see any obvious place that it happened. Overall it was a solid match. There was a few cool moves, but nothing earth shattering or "I can't believe I just saw that." in it.

!@!@!@!@ Jd' TV 4/11/98 (taped 2/2/98 from Korakuen Hall)
(by DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Yabushita/ Sakai vs Momoe Nakanishi/ Nanae Takahashi (AJW):

WOO-HOO! The Judo gals of J'd take the neato lil youngsters of AJW to the mat and then it goes all aerial, thus, this turns into a good little match. Sakai is SO adorable and she does the most cuddly Arm-Destroying Top Rope Judo Throw on earth. Momoe goes all aerial as she is wont to do and it's a good counterpoint to the Twin Little Dynamos Of Submission. Nanae goes all shootstyle with Yabushita and the results are pretty nifty as Nanae uses her odd power game to counteract the speed of the lesser Judo girl. Momoe supplies the traditional highspots and Sakai actually busts out a cool moonsault to mix with her Meiko Satomura Lite shootstyle-drenched highspots. This was quite the good GAEA youngster match at three-quarter speed since it had alot of good moves but without the GAEA-staple funloving hatred and psychology. Still a real good effort all around. Sakai with a Top Rope Cross Arm Breaker.

Cooga vs EMI~! Motokawa:

ALLRIGHT! It's Emi~! She's spunkier than ever in this! AW CRAP! It's Cooga, who always wrestles like she's eaten a lot of turkey and the triptaphen has just kicked in. Emi hits a couple of nice spots as she goes all luchadelic on the lethargic oldster but she's too young to carry a match and Cooga isn't good enough to carry a match and the spaces between spots is eternal and the set-ups are clumsy and the timing is off on about everything, nothing is hard, swift and

clean. I could go on. Let's just say that I heart Emi but this was not good. No not at all. Cooga wins with something.

Abe/ Sogabe vs Fang Suzuki/ Shark Tsuchiya:

Golly! Sogabe was really on her way to be a good worker. It's a shame that she hung it up at such a young age. Abe is really tiny but it's J'd and there are lotsa tiny youngsters to wrestle so it's not a bad thing. A bad thing. Hmmm..... a bad thing. Anyway, Sogabe and Abe get some nice low-grade highspots in on FANG! Suzuki, hitting lot's of top rope dropkicks and assisted dropkicks and other lowrisk stuff that made up the good parts of the match which almost outnumbered the sections that sucked. Sucked... hmmm.. sucked..... sucked. Oh. Anyway, FANG! Suzuki is not as hideously horrible as most other FMW Women wrestlers eventhough she is a rookie, I'm guessing. She sold everything well and didn't blow anything except for this one sequence where everybody in the ring looked lost and they wandered around trying to figure out what to do, which wasn't very good. Wasn't very good. Hmmm... wasn't very good. Wasn't very good. Oh yeah, now I remember! SHARK TSUCHIYA was in this match GOOD GOD- DOES SHE SUCK. Think of Bryan Adams without the workrate and drive and desire. She's the worst wrestler ever. God, she really sucks. Yep. Sucks.

Mima Shimoda vs Chikako Shiratori:

Oh BOY! YEE-HAW! RASMUSSEN will try to keep a semblance of decorum and will refrain from obvious "Every red-blooded heterosexual male is sportin' some wood at the thought of this match" type comments. I mean...uh... Mima didn't even wear the little pants that say. "JUMPIN HOLY CRAP!" and...uh... and Shiratori isn't exotically fabulous looking like the divine Okino... and...hmm... she's quite an average worker at best despite the fact that she's so SPECTACULARLY Goddesslike... and Shimoda hardly makes me feel all funny in my...my... AH CRAP, lemme get to the match. Shimoda beats her with a chair and pretty much kills her with a bunch of suplexes and then does a top rope butterfly suplex for the pin. Gee, 2:27? I guess the officials at J'd didn't want the young men in the viewing audience to have enough time to formulate impure thoughts. Of course in that line of thinking they must have forced Mima to wear those pants because Shimoda's big pants SUCK! It's frickin SUPER VIXEN MIMA SHIMODA! SHE'S WEARING PANTS THAT MY GREAT AUNT WOULD WEAR TO THE POOL AT HER RETIREMENT HOME! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE!?!? Hmmmmmm.... I'm...uh.... sorry. Shimoda does.... a really good job.... in the... preposterously short time allotted.... to keep the...uh.... divine Shiratori from...mmm... botching anything. Great... workrate. And...stuff. Postmatch... they...hoo-boy...do stuff.

Lioness Aska/ Bloody vs Jaguar/ Kosugi

HEY NOW! Jaguar Yokota is FRICKIN AWESOME. I mean FRICKIN AWESOME. 38 years old and maintainer of a fantastic workrate, possessor of a GIANT arsenal of moves that she has taught to everybody who was anybody or anybody who has taught anybody who was anybody in Women's wrestling; she looks GREAT; she bumps like a KING; she suplexes like a MONSTER; and she can brawl like a MOTHER F*CKER. Her and Lioness Asuka- who has found a new, effective role as Bitchy Old Woman Ass-Kicker- have put together the matches that have lifted J'd out of its beginning doldrums to make it a promotion that is producing a body

of matches that one CAN'T ignore if one is to seek out all worthy wrestling that is out there. Jaguar and Lioness are old school and they suddenly just kick ass in this feud. Lioness and Bloody maul Kosugi with assorted piledrivers and powerbombs, bringing out the tables, the chains and the blade. The only thing saving Kosugi is the fact that the ref is out of position to make a count as she is trying to keep order between the warring factions outside the ring- as the entire roster is beating the crap out of each other in-between interfering in the match at assorted spots. Jaguar isn't afraid to fly into a bunch of chairs and take truly horrendous bumps to the floor to justify her absense to make saves as her great rival is beating the holy hell out of her very talented protege. Jaguar goes all garbagy by beating Lioness and Bloody with a chair and hitting a Fat Ass Superplex off a table situated in the ropes, to fend off Lioness from really killing Kosugi dead. Jaguar's offense is cut short as Bloody whumps her in the head with a chain, allowing Lioness to hit a Very Large Powerbomb. A misdirected chairshot by Bloody busts open Lioness, but a missed Asai Moonsault by Jaguar allows Lioness to drive her skull through a ringside table. Satisfied that the match is over, Lioness tells her underling to go pin Jaguar Yokota, not realizing that Kosugi has recovered enough to jump Lioness and get her in a stranglehold while Jaguar dodges a moonsault and starts suplexing the living hell out of Bloody- hitting about every suplex in the Wrestling of Japan repertoire including a full rotation released German from the top rope. Jaguar REALLY kills the hell out Bloody with the hurtiest looking FisherMan Buster I've ever seen and pins the mortal remains thus ending a WAAAAAAAY fun match. This was old school ass-stomping and old-school heat gathering and old school psychology and old school bumps and old school everything. All I REALLY know is that it was really really beautiful. YOU WANT ALLLL THIS.

\$\$%\$%\$%\$%\$ HYPER VISUAL FIGHTING ARSION- The Grand Opening Virgin COMMERCIAL TAPE- 2/18/98 (Korakuen Hall)
(by PHIL SCHNEIDER)

ARSION is one of the six-dozen or so women's leagues formed after AJW went under and then didn't go under. As the business geniuses who run Japaneese wrestling figured "Hey, just because one women's promotion with all of the big stars, an established fan base, TV contract and years of tradition, can't make any money, doesn't mean that six thousand separate women's federations with one star each, and no fan base, can't make millions." Hyper Visual Fighting ARSION has Aja Kong as their big star and a small group of LLPW castoffs and such, but they put on a fun little show, and seem to run a different style which I kind of dug.

Candy Okutsu vs. Yumi Fukawa:

These girls have pretty much been a pair of wrestlers I have glossed over while watching JWP and AJW respectivly. They came out and rocked the house in the new league though, putting on a ass-kicking 15 minute draw. Candy was all shootstyle as she went right after the leg, with a bunch of rolling flying kneebar stuff. While Fukawa went after the arm with a lot of juji-gatane takedowns, and other attacks on the arm, including a rocking quebrada onto the arm. Fukawa has a great moonsault where she lands all of her weight on the person taking it. Really good match, which was a lot more submission based than most AJW matches.

Mikiko Futagami vs. Jesse Bennett:

Futagami is doing kind of Dean Malenko stoic shooter thing which was really cool. Jessie Bennett is the slightly slimmer but still bloated sister of AJW buffet queen 1993-1997 Reggie Bennett. Jesse is kind of cute for a very big girl, she has that

>>get-real-drunk-at-a-frat-party-end-up-balling-then-pretending-to-regret-to-your-friends-but-dee p-in-your-black-soul-not-minding-at-all << look to her. Jesse is new, but I already like her better than her sister. Her power moves (specifically a Liger bomb, spine bomb and facecrusher) were real vicious and fit well with the storyline. Futagami stiffed her and countered a german suplex with an armlock for the win. I dug this match, and I definitely want to see more Futagami.

Aja Kong vs. Michiko Omukai:

Omukai was all spunky slapping Aja before the bell. Aja responds by potatoing the crap out of her. Omukai showed she could stun her with her kicks, but spent most of the time getting whooped. The end was cool as Aja put Michiko in a choke sleeper and knocked her out. As she was revived she attacked Aja again, who choked her out again. I like Aja a bunch so I dug her dishing out the ass whooping like old times. Omukai's kicks missed too much for her to ascend to a Kumiko Maeakawa level of godesshood, but she has some promise.

Reggie Bennett vs. Rie Tamada:

Imagine if Kendo Ka Shin wrestled Mighty Wilbur, you would have an approximation of this match. Bennett came in an all leather outfit that must have taken a herd of cattle to make. Bennett sold more then she usually does in AJW, and Tamada got in some neat armbar counters. The end was kind of cool as Bennett countered a hurricanrana into a Boston crab. I dug Tamada's new style and I would like to see it against someone less porcine and immobile than Refrigerator Reggie.

Aja Kong/ Michiko Omukai/ Yumi Fukawa vs. Mikiko Futagami/ Rie Tamada / Candy Okutsu:

This match was a typical AJW spotfest, which I didn't dig nearly as much as the matches before. Most of these wrestlers fit better with the mat based style, and there was really no need for highspot trains, and shit like that. Some good stuff especially from Futagami, but I dug the psudeo shoot stuff better. Hell! we already have one New Manami Jackota, there is no need to try to turn otherwise cool wrestlers into carbon copies of her royal blown spottness.

@#@#@#@#@# NEW JAPAN TV 4/18/98 (taped 4/4/98 from the Tokyo Dome)
(by DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Kensuke Sasaki vs Tatsumi Fujinami:

I'm not buying this match, pally. And not because I think Sasaki sucks (though he kinda does a lot of times) and because Hash didn't get the belt a couple of weeks ago and all the other obvious reasons. Hey, Fujinami was a great great wrestler, best in the world at one point- I mean I LOVED FUJINAMI- Fujinami vs Maeda is STILL my favorite ALL-TIME match that I've EVER seen. But c'mon, he's almost as old as Ric Flair. That crap might fly in the US where

noone can name ten top-calibre heavyweights even by lowly US standards. But New Japan has actual heavyweights to put the belt on, so screwing their belt to "pop a big house" with Fujinami's retirement coming up REALLY sucks. Hell, I can name Hash, Koshinaka, Chono, Mutoh, Nishimura, Tenzan, Scott Norton, and Izuuka right off the top of my head that could be positioned-(Okay maybe not Nishimura or Izuuka at this point)- to take the belt. Hell, let the True Original Dragon win G-1 like they did with the ossified Chosu or let him take fifteen years to retire like they let Grampa Inoki do. What they should have really done is keep it on Sasaki and see what he's got for drawing power. I'm guessing that Papa Sasaki wanted to drop the belt since this was the end of the guaranteed big houses of the near future and he didn't wanna get stuck with a half house at his first test of his drawing power. Anyway, the actual match itself was really good until the end. It adhered pretty closely to dominant New Japan heavyweight psychology- which would make sense since Fujinami probably created it- of a simple but effective story of Fujinami stretching and striking the leg of Sasaki and Sasaki using his powermoves to work on the neck of Fujinami to set up his Northern Lights Bomb and StrangleHold Gamma. Fujinami dominates early taking out Sasaki's leg out with Dragon Screws and a couple of Figure Fours. Sasaki gets on offense and hits a bunch of Chosu lariats, a couple of NLB's and two Scorpion Deathlocks. And herein lies my problem: In the WILDLY Better Than It EVER Had A Right To Be Muta vs Sasaki match- where they used the exact psychology as this match and pretty much the same moves (except Mutoh used those truly great top rope dropkicks to Sasaki's knees to set up his Dragon Screws and Figure Fours) Mutoh beats the living hell out of Sasaki MOUNTAINS more than Fujinami beat the hell out of Sasaki and Sasaki basically hit half of what he hit Fujinami with before Mutoh succame to ONE Northern Lights Bomb, AND YET Fujinami- who I wasn't even buying as a credible tagteam champ- kicks out of TWO Northern Light Bombs from a stronger Sasaki? Don't even ask me to compare what put Chono under to what DIDN'T put Fujinami under. What are theydoing? When did Fujinami become stronger than Mutoh, Chono, Hashimoto, and thus EVERY heavyweight in the company? Did Bischoff show Chosu tapes of Goldberg and show him the financial advantage of a no-selling Monster face pushed ham-fistedly to the top in regards to toothless yahoo marks buying it because TV says so? And then did Chosu tweak the concept to create this new Monster Face called... TATSUMI FUJINAMI?!?! Hell, you go figure it out. I knew NJ was the mark league of Japan but this is booking right out of the Nitro playbook. It's like if All Japan had Jumbo Tsuruta suddenly come back and challenge for the Triple Crown again and pin Kenta Kobashi after kicking out of three Orange Crushes and then beat Misawa after Misawa gives him two Tiger Driver 91's because HEY! SUDDENLY JUMBO IS ALL GREAT AGAIN! FOR SOME REASON! Watch at your own risk.

NEXT WEEK: CMLL IN JAPAN! METRIC TONS OF J'd! THAT WCW HH STUFF WE KEEP THREATENING YOU WITH! WAR! ALL JAPAN! WOO-HOO!

For Rev Ray, Phil and Phil- this is Dean saying, "Get the Hell out of my yard!"

See my baby twist- she twists the night away- I say she twists so good- and then she turns me- and I heard her say "well that's the way I like it"- I like it too much
Ballad of Johnny Burma, Mission of Burma- Greatest Band Ever.

